

H.213

Introduced by Representatives Masland of Thetford, Campbell of St.

Johnsbury, Howard of Rutland City, McCullough of Williston,

and Morris of Springfield

Referred to Committee on

Date:

Subject: Health; mental health; suicide prevention; coordination and care

Statement of purpose of bill as introduced: This bill proposes to: (1) establish

a Suicide Prevention Coordinator within the Department of Mental Health;

(2) require the services of suicide prevention counselors by designated

hospitals, designated agencies, crisis hotlines, and law enforcement agencies;

and (3) require the Department of Financial Regulation to submit a report

pertaining to required coverage by health insurers for services provided by

suicide prevention counselors.

An act relating to preventing death by suicide

It is hereby enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Vermont:

Sec. 1. 18 V.S.A. § 7253 is amended to read:

§ 7253. CLINICAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AND OVERSIGHT

The Commissioner of Mental Health, in consultation with health care

providers as defined in section 9432 of this title, including designated

1 hospitals, designated agencies, individuals with mental conditions or
2 psychiatric disabilities, and other stakeholders, shall design and implement a
3 clinical resource management system that ensures the highest quality of care
4 and facilitates long-term, sustained recovery for individuals in the custody of
5 the Commissioner.

6 (1) For the purpose of coordinating the movement of individuals across
7 the continuum of care to the most appropriate services, the clinical resource
8 management system shall:

9 * * *

10 (K) Ensure patient access to a suicide prevention counselor pursuant
11 to section 7261.

12 * * *

13 Sec. 2. 18 V.S.A. § 7260 is added to read:

14 § 7260. SUICIDE PREVENTION COORDINATOR

15 (a) There is established the position of Suicide Prevention Coordinator
16 within the Department of Mental Health for the purpose of coordinating, across
17 State government and in collaboration with community partners, including
18 designated hospitals as defined in section 7101 of this title, agencies
19 designated pursuant to section 8907 of this title, crisis hotlines, and other
20 organizations within the State regularly interfacing with individuals who are at
21 risk of death by suicide, policies and programs to reduce death by suicide. The

1 Suicide Prevention Coordinator shall have a master's-level degree or
2 bachelor's-level degree in a human services field, mental health, or public
3 administration and professional-level experience in prevention, mental health,
4 public health, or a closely related field.

5 (b) The Suicide Prevention Coordinator shall:

6 (1) identify and coordinate initiatives across State government and
7 among community stakeholder groups that prevent suicide;

8 (2) examine promising suicide prevention practices in other jurisdictions
9 that may be replicated in Vermont;

10 (3) train and develop guidance documents for suicide prevention
11 counselors established pursuant to section 7261 of this title;

12 (4) develop model discharge policies for individuals who are at risk of
13 death by suicide for use by designated hospitals and designated agencies;

14 (5) coordinate biennial trainings for the staff of each inpatient
15 psychiatric unit, designated agency, and crisis hotline in the State, including
16 where applicable;

17 (A) signs and symptoms of suicidal ideation or abuse or both;

18 (B) responsible discharge policies for persons at risk of suicide;

19 (C) respectful treatment of persons at risk of suicide; and

20 (D) the suicide prevention policy of the inpatient psychiatric unit,
21 designated agency, or crisis hotline; and

1 (6) coordinate trainings for law enforcement officers on the signs and
2 symptoms of suicidal ideation and appropriate response techniques.

3 Sec. 3. 18 V.S.A. § 7261 is added to read:

4 § 7261. SUICIDE PREVENTION COUNSELORS

5 (a) Each designated hospital as defined in section 7101 of this title, agency
6 designated pursuant to section 8907 of this title, crisis hotline, and law
7 enforcement agency shall ensure a suicide prevention counselor is available
8 either on the premise or on call at all times of the day. A suicide prevention
9 counselor shall receive training from the Suicide Prevention Coordinator
10 established pursuant to section 7260 of this title.

11 (b) A suicide prevention counselor shall:

12 (1) provide immediate, individualized, one-on-one suicide prevention
13 counseling to any individual receiving services within the counselor's
14 organization who is at risk of suicide; and

15 (2) provide ongoing suicide prevention counseling to each individual
16 within the counselor's organization who is at risk of suicide, on a daily basis or
17 more frequently as may be commensurate with the results of the individual's
18 emergency examination pursuant to section 7504 or 7505 of this title.

1 Sec. 4. 18 V.S.A. § 8913 is amended to read:

2 § 8913. MINIMUM PROGRAM STANDARDS AND OTHER
3 REGULATIONS

4 (a) The Commissioners shall establish minimum program standards for
5 services provided by community mental health and developmental disability
6 agencies. Minimum program standards shall specify the basic activities and
7 resources ~~which~~ that are necessary for the implementation of such programs.

8 (b) The procedure for establishing such standards shall be in accordance
9 with 3 V.S.A. chapter 25.

10 (c) Program standards established pursuant to this section shall include the
11 services of a suicide prevention counselor in accordance with section 7261 of
12 this title.

13 Sec. 5. REPORT; COVERAGE FOR SERVICES PROVIDED BY SUICIDE
14 PREVENTION COUNSELORS

15 (a) On or before January 15, 2022, the Department for Financial
16 Regulation, in consultation with the Department of Mental Health, health
17 insurers operating in the State, the Office of the Health Care Advocate, and
18 other interested stakeholders, shall submit a report to the Senate Committee on
19 Health and Welfare and to the House Committee on Health Care containing its
20 recommendation as to whether a health insurance plan should cover services

1 provided by suicide prevention counselors in accordance with 18 V.S.A.
2 § 7260.

3 (b) As used in this section, “health insurance plan” means any health
4 insurance policy or other health benefit plan offered by a health insurer, as
5 defined in 18 V.S.A. § 9402. The term does not include policies or plans
6 providing coverage for specified disease or other limited benefit coverage.

7 Sec. 6. EFFECTIVE DATE

8 This act shall take effect on July 1, 2021.